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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN CITRUS COUNTY URGES CAUTION WITH FISH KILLS



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Merritt Island, FL – The Florida Department of Health in Brevard County (DOH-Brevard) urges residents to take caution with local “fish kills,” a sudden appearance of dead fish in a lake, river or pond, possibly due to heavy rainfall associated with Hurricane Irma.

Witnessing a fish kill can be startling and while there are many reasons a fish kill can occur most are natural causes. Increases in fish kills often occur during the spring and summer. While some fish kills are a result of human activity, the most common causes of fish kills are heavy rainfall, lake turnover, and salinity changes in the water or algal blooms.

While eating fish can be a vital part of a healthy diet, there are health risks associated with consuming or having contact with fish, other seafood, and/or contaminated waters from a fish kill. Below are general precautionary measures:

- Do not eat, collect, or use fish, shrimp or crabs that were found dead or dying, from distressed areas or from locations where dead fish are present.
- Do not harvest or eat shellfish from waters that have been closed by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, or from areas where there are large numbers of distressed or dead fish.
- Do not harvest fish, shrimp or crabs that are acting erratically, have sores or ulcers, or that appear to be diseased.
- Do not swim or play in areas where distressed or dead fish are present. If you come in contact with the water, immediately wash exposed areas thoroughly with soap and clean water.
- Do not let pets swim in or drink from water in the area of a fish kill. If your pets come in contact with water, immediately wash their fur thoroughly with soap and clean water.
- Items that have come in contact with affected waters should be thoroughly washed with soap and clean water or disinfected with a bleach solution (mix in 1/4 cup of household bleach per one gallon of water and immerse for 15 minutes) prior to continuing their use.
- Contact your primary care physician if you believe you have become ill as a result of eating and swallowing or being exposed to fish or affected waters during a fish kill.

If you have other health questions or concerns about fish kills, please call the DOH-Brevard at 321-633-2100 or email Brevard.EHS@flhealth.gov.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission administers a toll-free Fish Kill Hotline (1-800-636-0511) for reporting the locations of fish kills and/or diseased or abnormal fish. When reporting a fish kill, please note the following:

1. Date and time the incident was first noted
2. Species of fish
3. Current weather conditions
4. Water color abnormalities
5. Location (include GPS coordinates if possible)
6. Condition of the fish (include pictures if available)

Reports can also be submitted on the FWC [website](#). If calling after hours or on the weekend, a biologist will return your call on the next business day.

If you see an unknown substance in a lake or water body and suspect the fish kill is the result of a toxic spill, call the Florida Division of Emergency Management's 24-hour State Watch Office at 850-815-4001 or 1-800-320-0519.

For more information, please contact your county health department or visit www.floridahealth.gov or www.FloridaDisaster.org.

About the Florida Department of Health

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